

SOUTHERNCROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2025



Fun, games and Jesus

HOW CRÈCHE CAN HELP GROW FAITH IN OUR LITTLE ONES

Anglicare scam warning ▪ *What's in a welcome?*
SRE teacher testimonies ▪ *Illustrating the epistles*



Preschooler potential

Foundations: playtime is an essential part of a kids' program at your church.

Jess Moran

There's always been a need for a crèche and a playgroup, and a need for 0-5 ministry at our church. When I started working here six years ago, I got to grow and develop the existing 0-5 program.

We combine crèche and preschool children all together.

Kids need to feel safe where they are, so it's a blessing to ensure there is a place specifically for them. The need is always there – most churches have some sort of crèche and a need for 0-5 care.

Our program runs while church is on, and is for kids from when they can walk until when

they start school. We have 15-20 minutes of free play and lots to play with!

We write our own kids' programs. It's organised so that every three years we will have gone through the entire Bible with them. Most kids want to be in group time. Singing songs

SOUTHERNCROSS February - March 2025

volume 31 number 1



Missed the last issue of *Southern Cross*?
Download here: sydneyanglicans.net/about/southerncross

COVER: Obi is having the best time at crèche!

Publisher: Anglican Media Sydney
PO Box W185 Parramatta Westfield 2150 NSW
P: 02 8860 8860 F: 02 8860 8899
E: info@anglicanmedia.com.au

Managing Editor: Russell Powell

Editor: Judy Adamson

Art director: Stephen Mason

Advertising Manager: Matthew Peters

P: 02 8860 8850 E: ads@anglicanmedia.com.au

Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement.
Inclusion of advertising material is at the discretion of the publisher.

Subscriptions: Garry Joy

P: 02 8860 8861 E: gjoy@anglicanmedia.com.au

\$44.00 per annum (Australia)

Printed by: Southern Colour

MOORE COLLEGE GRADUATION



INTO ALL THE WORLD...



Speaker:
Simon Gillham

17 MARCH 2025

7:30-9:30pm | The Great Hall, USYD



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our graduates: in person or online

is the most engaging part and they don't realise that, while they're having fun, they're also memorising Scripture and praising God together.

I want all the kids to listen to the story, and while we expect the preschoolers to be able to pay attention, we know that the very young ones' participation depends on how their morning is going.

WHY DO WE PRIORITISE TEACHING THE WHOLE BIBLE TO TODDLERS?

Kids thrive off routine. When a child comes to crèche, if they know what to expect every week, with all levels of creativity and fun, we're setting up a routine of what church looks like for them. If they expect they are going to read the Bible, pray and sing, that's a practice we're setting up for their lifetime.

The play will change as they grow, but having that routine by the time they are five sets them up for moving to kids' church, then youth group,

and then adulthood. Creating godly routines when they start attending church is important.

DISCIPLESHIP IS FOR EVERYONE

Kids need to be creating healthy, godly patterns as early as possible. Having Bible stories, songs and prayer in crèche helps them learn that this is what happens at church, and these are the things we do if we want to grow in our love and knowledge of Jesus.

From as early as two, it can create a strong gospel foundation in their lives that will hopefully continue on as teens and adults. Discipleship starts from the moment they're born. I don't want kids missing out on growing in their love and knowledge of Jesus just because they're four years old!

WE ARE PARTNERS IN THIS PRECIOUS MINISTRY

Discipleship comes first and foremost from Mum and Dad. But not everyone's home is safe,



Creativity: who doesn't love playdough time?

not everyone has parents who are Christian, and we can't just say to parents, "That's your job". We want to partner with parents as they go through the ups and downs of parenting.

It's my job to look for resources, help engage their children at church, and support them. I find it a blessing to share what I'm learning and what I get to do with families.

We have a sweet family with three kids in crèche who love one of our crèche leaders. The parents tell us their children thank God for them every single night in their prayers! I never thought that kids would attach themselves to another person this early, but it's lovely to hear that they love their leaders and that these leaders have such a huge impact on the children.

I want parents to know that coming to church weekly, a place where they will grow in their own love and knowledge of Jesus, is also going to set their kids up to have a strong relationship with God as they get older and life gets complicated.

Having a regular habit of church in their kids' lives is really



Godly habits: Jess Moran teaches a Bible story to kids at Miranda.

important to support them in the growth of healthy, godly habits. It shows your children what's important in life – worshipping Jesus and having fellowship with other Christians.

Discipleship is for everyone. Kids learning from the Bible, learning how to pray and worshipping God in song from an early age will set them up for life. It's a really important part of their spiritual development. Even when it's tough, keep coming to church, and keep reading the Bible with your kids. SC

Jess Moran is the kids' minister at St Luke's, Miranda.





"There is no place whatsoever for sexual abuse or other misconduct in the life of our churches. I am committed to ensuring the Sydney Anglican Church has a consistent culture of safe ministry through regular and up-to-date training and resourcing of clergy and lay church workers."

The Office of the Director of Safe Ministry promotes the practice of Christian ministry in accordance with the highest Biblical standards of respect and care.

A Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme is available to provide counselling and other support to victims of misconduct or abuse.

No Place For Misconduct and Abuse

Abuse Report Line 1800 774 945

Abuse Report Form safeministry.org.au/report

50 years of foster care

Tara Sing

When Elena Lindfield Seagar first saw a foster care advertisement in the newsletter of her son's high school, she had no idea that it was the beginning of a carer journey that would span 24 years. She and her husband, David, and their children, decided that fostering was one way they could make a difference as a family in the lives of others.

They originally signed up to offer crisis and respite care, and looked after many children from varying circumstances during their time as foster carers.

"Some were truly in crisis, with just an overnight stay, arriving in the middle of the night," recalls Mrs Lindfield Seagar, who attends St Paul's, Castle Hill.

"Some were days, some were weeks, and some were longer. Due to circumstances with particular little ones, that changed quite naturally into short-term care when it seemed best for the child."

Anglicare is entering its 51st year of providing foster care. Since beginning the program in 1974, over 1000 families have stepped up to provide safe and stable homes for children in need. More than 3500 children have been cared for, and many reunited safely with their families through the Family Preservation & Restoration Program.

The Anglicare foster program has always been committed to care for vulnerable children as a practical expression of faith.

It is a way for individual Christians, their church networks, and Anglicare, to partner together in the values Christ exemplified

– the importance of children, protecting the vulnerable, sacrifice for the sake of another, and showing compassion to the needy.

The need is great, so the organisation's foster care division is always busy.

"Anglicare's ongoing work to advocate for and raise awareness about the needs of vulnerable children will continue, as we seek to address a sector that is in crisis," says Simon Miller, the CEO of Anglicare Sydney.

Part of raising awareness includes the promotion of "foster circles", which aim to build a framework for churches to promote foster care, be involved and offer practical support to families in their parish who are fostering children.

"Demographically, Christian families are among the most likely to become carers, and we hope that the additional awareness and support provided will be instrumental in helping meet this urgent need," Mr Miller says.

On average, more than 300 children in NSW require emergency accommodation every night. Meredith Donkin, Anglicare's Foster Care Relationship Lead, sees a great opportunity for the Sydney Diocese to play a pivotal role in addressing this urgent need.

"With over 300 churches in the Sydney Diocese alone, if each of our churches raised up one well-supported foster care family, we could empty those motels and rewrite the story of foster care in our community," she says.

Although the Lindfield Seagars are no longer actively fostering,



Providing love and security to kids: David and Elena Lindfield Seagar.

they are thankful for the many lives they were able to impact.

"Some of the questions we were asked over the years included, 'How can you let [the child] go?'," Mrs Lindfield Seagar recalls. "My response? We have no choice. That's part of the deal.

"It's a very real pain, but the real pain is outweighed by the joy we gained from our relationship with them, from meeting their

needs, and giving them a firm foundation and the love and security they so desperately needed.

"We have come to a place now where life has changed, so we are no longer caring. I particularly miss it. We won't ever lose interest in little ones around us. God gave us a heart for them, and we continue to connect and pray." SC

Anglicare Job Opportunities

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"We love because Jesus first loved us." – 1 John 4:19



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God at work in the Territory



Community event: the people of Minyerri and supporters walk in procession to the ordination of Darryn Farrell (centre) by Bishop Greg Anderson.

Judy Adamson

For well over a century, the work of the Church Missionary Society Australia has included sharing the love of Jesus with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory – and last month the Territory’s Anglican bishop, Greg Anderson, and some of his Aboriginal ministry colleagues, spoke at CMS Summer School in Katoomba about how God is working in their midst,

“So many good things are happening among us in the Aboriginal churches of the Territory,” Bishop Anderson said.

“First of all, there’s a new generation of church leaders... in particular, a new cohort of male leaders.

“These four men have been a great support for each other as they prepared for ordination, and now, if they need encouragement, they don’t ring up all the time to the whitefellas, the *munanga*, the *balanda*, but they call each other. And that

has been a really special thing.”

On the platform with Bishop Anderson were two of these men: the Rev Darryn Farrell, who ministers to his community at Minyerri, three hours southeast of Katherine; and the Rev James Woods who, along with his wife Miriam Numamurdirdi, serves the community at Urapunga (just west of Ngukurr) and at Nungalinga College, the Indigenous Bible college in Darwin.

Their local communities are small and Mr Woods said that, at Urapunga, “People can hear from their homes that we’re having a big fellowship and people are singing with joy”.

Some community members gave their lives to Jesus in the past year, which was a cause for great rejoicing – not only because they had learned the truths of the gospel and joined the church, but because family members who aren’t believers now come to church with them.

“Even if they’re not Christian they still come, to support and to encourage this new Christian,” Mr Woods explained. “And while this person is there, the people of the whole community will come and their family will be joined into that.”

Mr Farrell would love to see more of his community stand up for Jesus and be part of the church, as well as undergoing Bible college training, but said it can be hard for people to go out from the community.

He is also keen to show Minyerri locals how God has spoken to Aboriginal people through dreamtime stories. He paints, and takes kids on walkabout to teach them – and remind himself – how God wants to shape people into Christ’s likeness.

“Our billabong has stories from many years back,” he said, as he recalled standing beside it with his grandmother, aunty and uncle. “It’s a normal billabong...

but there’s a rock inside of it and, when we were kids, we would swim in the billabong and stand on that rock. It’s still there today, and that rock is the one that keeps the water alive and fresh... without that rock there’d be no billabong.

“I teach that to the kids – that Jesus Christ is also that rock, and what comes from him is the living word.”

WALK TOGETHER

Bishop Anderson also spoke about a forum created to make it easier for Aboriginal leaders to express to the diocese their people’s challenges and hopes.

“Aboriginal church leaders come to all the normal things our clergy come to; ordained and lay people come to our synods – that’s all good,” he said. “But these forums are dominated by English and *munanga* whitefella faces... and Darren and James and Miriam can be confident in that environment, but at the



On country: (left) the Rev James Woods with his wife Miriam and Bishop Anderson; (right) the Rev Colleen Mamarika, Annette Anderson and students on Groote.

same time it's a bit swamping."

Taking the first letter of "word" or "story" in the four main languages used in the diocese, the forum has been named WALK; Bishop Anderson sees it as "a great picture of white-fellas and the Aboriginal church leaders walking together".

Underscoring the ongoing importance of Bible translation, he added that while there was a complete Bible in Kriol, there is only a New Testament in Wubuy and Kunwinjku, and seven books in Anindilyakwa. "[Translation] is really the powerhouse of the church, because as people hear God's word and are trained in it and respond to it, they hear God speaking – and we want them to hear God speaking in their own language."

Partnerships with churches were highlighted, such as the ongoing link between Minyerri and the Anglican congregation from Bobbin Head, which the bishop would be more than happy to replicate elsewhere.

"We are very open to those kinds of partnerships," he said. "Over the years, [Bobbin Head members] have grown so many relationships with the church people there. They just come and hang out, and the Minyerri people really appreciate that... but it's also a real encouragement to Minyerri people to know that

people outside their own little patch are interested in them and praying for them and supporting them."

TRAINING

A range of subjects have begun in recent years at Nungalinga College, including courses in chaplaincy – which Miriam Numamurdirdi has studied and now teaches to others – children's ministry, translation, faith and family, and leadership.

Ms Numamurdirdi now volunteers at Darwin Hospital as a chaplain, alongside Kriol-speaking missionaries. She said people need God's word in hospital, especially if they didn't know Jesus and were separated from family.

She particularly mentioned one man they had prayed for, who had been in hospital a long time. On a return visit less than a week later, they found him up, with family around him, ready to be discharged.

"God is so powerful if we have faith and believe in him," she said simply. "[There are] so many ways we can help."

Part of Nungalinga's training is on country, which not only makes it more accessible for students but allows teachers to present a course in a local Aboriginal language.

"There are so many different

languages in the classroom – maybe 10 or 15 different languages among 20 or 25 people – so English is the language of the classroom but, if you go on country, it just gives an opportunity to do that in one community," the bishop said.

"[My wife] Annette and I went out to Gunbalanya, and Annette was teaching an Old Testament

overview course; and there were some cards and actions that tracked through the story.

"She was able to help the students to think up how we would express those important truths in Kunwinjku so that they've got it anchored in their own mind, not in foreign concepts but in their own heart language." SC

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Scammers target the vulnerable

Russell Powell

Anglicare has issued a warning about scammers preying on vulnerable people through fake websites and scam social media pages.

Increased cost-of-living pressures and the rise of artificial intelligence has led to a greater level of online scam activity, and a range of trusted charities – including Anglicare – are being targeted.

“Anglicare Sydney serves the most vulnerable people in our communities, and it is incredibly disheartening and disturbing to see these pages targeting those who can least afford to be scammed,” said Anglicare Sydney’s CEO, Simon Miller.

Mr Miller’s warning came after two attempts late last year to impersonate Anglicare and other charities online by offering “interest-free loans” to Australians struggling with the rising cost of living.

On Facebook, scammers used a fake version of the tree logo used by Anglicare Sydney with the bogus name “Anglisure Credit” and the slogan “building

brighter futures, one loan at a time”. The Salvation Army was also targeted, and there was an additional page masquerading as an Anglicare agency outside Sydney – offering people free fridges in order to steal their details.

Many of the scams operate by direct messaging on social media.

“Our focus is twofold: on quick reporting and removal of scam pages, and helping our clients be scam aware,” Mr Miller said.

“Fast detection and reporting of scam pages is key, and we work with Meta to have pages taken down as soon as possible. In addition to the Meta verification [known as the ‘blue check’, or ‘blue tick’], we’ve found best success by using Meta’s Brand Rights Protection portal to have pages that use our trademark taken down, reducing removal time from days to hours.”

Anglicare has also established pages on Facebook and on its website with information on scam detection.

“In addition to a range of tips



Be watchful and prepared: Lauren White from Anglicare warns people about scams in an online video.

on ‘How to spot a scam’, we say Anglicare Sydney will *never* ask for your myGov, banking or any other passwords,” the CEO said. “We will never assess you for help over social media.

“Sadly, wherever there are opportunities for financial gain, scammers will proliferate. We

want to see tech giants like Meta, and others [dealing with] cyber crime, increase investment in scam prevention to better protect the community.” SC

See Anglicare Sydney’s official Facebook page and the website www.anglicare.org.au/scam-awareness/

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JOAN AUGUSTA MACKENZIE TRAVELLING SCHOLARSHIP

Applications are invited for the Joan Augusta Mackenzie Travelling Scholarship to enable the recipient to undertake study and/or gain experience in parish work overseas, preferably in the United Kingdom. The Scholarship is usually awarded for postgraduate study.


The Scholarship will commence on 1 September 2025 and is for the period of study or experience. The value of the Scholarship is \$30,000 each year, normally for up to three years.

Applications close at 5:00PM on 30 April 2025. For more information and application forms, please email scholarships@moore.edu.au

Applicants must:

- be clergy of the Anglican Church of Australia who have served at least two years since ordination as a Deacon and
- have been educated in Australia and
- intend to return to Australia at the end of the scholarship period.

The Trustee, Perpetual, awards the Scholarship in consultation with the Principal of Moore College and the Rector of St Thomas’ Church, North Sydney.



“Just imagine... what might happen”

Russell Powell

Many Sydney churches are gearing up to share Jesus in a special initiative from Easter to Pentecost this year.

Anglican churches nationally are joining in Hope25 and parishes are being encouraged to run a mission, share the resources from the Hope25 website and partner with a less-resourced church in another diocese to share hope in Jesus.

“I am hearing of individual parishes and mission areas working together in Sydney to engage in this mission,” says the Rev Gary O’Brien, director of Ministry Training & Development and one of Sydney’s representatives on the organising committee.

“We thank God that we have a rich history of seeking to reach out to others with the good news of Jesus here in Sydney, and Hope25 provides us with an opportunity to do it again and partner with others in proclaiming the gospel.”

One of the unusual features of the outreach is a national prayer meeting each month on Zoom. A Hope25-branded gospel of Luke (NIV version) has also been printed for people to give away



Get ready, Sydney: to share the love of Jesus through Hope25.

to friends and contacts.

“Just imagine with me, for a moment, what might happen to the Anglican Church of Australia if Anglicans across the country got on their knees to pray for their communities to encounter the hope we have in Jesus,” said the Bishop of Tasmania, Richard Condie, who chairs General Synod’s Ministry & Mission Commission.

“Imagine every parish church, in every town and city and suburb, of every diocese – in the

big cities and in the small towns at the same time – [speaking about] the common theme of ‘Hope in an Uncertain World’, with common branding and promotional material, banners, flyers, posters, social media, email campaigns, spots on local radio and ads in newspapers.

“Imagine all this backed up by the prayers of every Anglican, inviting the unchurched and dechurched, and the ‘never-thought-about-it-before’s’, to come to a dinner, or a service,

or a play group, or a fair, or a barbecue, or a wine and cheese event, where they are going to hear about Jesus and be invited to explore the Christian faith.

“Imagine, then, the people who might come to a short course, or an inquirers’ Bible study, or a new Christians discussion group. Imagine what impact we could have, and the encouragement this will bring, and the joy in heaven when people come to faith!”

See www.hope25.com.au

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New research on child abuse

The first national study of the prevalence of child abuse in religious settings has found that safe ministry and prevention strategies are having an effect, but researchers have called for further investigation.

The study, by a dozen Australian and international experts, has been published in the journal *Child Abuse and Neglect*. It utilised data from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS), which surveyed a large cross-section of society.

“Our study has generated the first nationally representative prevalence estimates for child sexual abuse by a leader or adult in a religious organisation in Australia,” the researchers say.

The experts found that one in 250 people had reported being sexually abused as a child by an

adult in a religious organisation.

Men reported significantly higher rates of child sexual abuse by religious perpetrators, and a substantial proportion were in Catholic settings (71.9 per cent). The research also found the prevalence of child sexual abuse in religious organisations had declined over time (2.2 per cent of men aged 65-plus, compared with 0.2 per cent of those aged 16-24).

However, the authors warned these estimates were conservative, as they were “limited to acts perpetrated by adults and do not include acts perpetrated by adolescents, nor acts in other settings with religious affiliations, such as schools and out-of-home care facilities. Accordingly, they under-represent the true overall

prevalence of child sexual abuse in religious organisations”.

The study echoes the findings of Australia’s Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which found victim-survivors take, on average, 23.9 years to disclose abuse perpetrated against them.

“Child sexual abuse by religious perpetrators is a profound violation of the child’s vulnerability, exploiting a tripartite power relationship driven by sexual, organisational and religious power,” the ACMS study authors said. “Collaborative efforts from church leadership and members are essential in fostering a culture of accountability, empathy and safety.”

The analysis has found “substantial prevalence of sexual abuse in religious settings, and especially in Catholic Church settings, almost exclusively by men, against boys. However, it has also found encouraging evidence of a decline in prevalence”.

The reasons for the latter included extensive prevention efforts, increased social awareness of child sexual abuse, and heightened supervision of children.

The Director of Safe Ministry

for the Sydney Diocese, Lachlan Bryant, observed that “the results of the recent study seemed to resonate with what we are seeing in terms of reported cases. This gives us hope and reinforces that our collective efforts across the Diocese are making a difference.

“Continuing vigilance in our safe ministry practices are essential to ensure a continuing positive trajectory.”

For her part, the chaplain of the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry, the Rev Belinda Burn, was encouraged by the findings.

“Over many years now our Diocese has made, and continues to make, tremendous efforts to build cultures and practices of safety in our parishes and ministries,” she said. “Although anecdotally it is becoming more clear these efforts have had a positive impact, it is encouraging to see findings of independent research that indicate there has been a real decline in the incidence of child abuse.

“As we continue to implement strategies to safeguard our churches for children and vulnerable people, I am encouraged to press on in our efforts to ensure our churches are increasingly safe communities for all.” SC

The Prayer Book Society of NSW presents:

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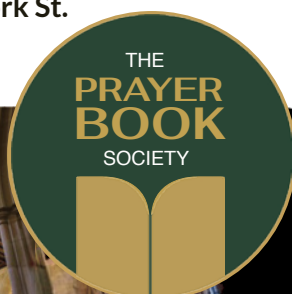
Come and experience gathered worship rich in Reformation theology: Archbishop Cranmer's 1552 Holy Communion service led by the Rev Justin Moffatt.

A forum discussion to follow between Dr Stephen Tong and the Rev Dr Mark Earngey, who will explore how the evangelical principles of classical Anglican liturgy can help renew our contemporary gatherings to better promote Christ and encourage believers.

Light refreshments will be served.

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Senior saint goes home

Judy Adamson

Sometimes you simply have to note the passing of a senior saint in the Diocese, and with Don McPhail it is a necessity.

In the eyes of the world, Donald Campbell McPhail's life was not especially noteworthy. He was born in 1928, lived most of his life in the same house on Mowbray Road, Willoughby, worked as an engineer, never married, and died on Christmas Day, aged 96.

However, it wasn't people's praise that Mr McPhail sought throughout his long life: he belonged to Jesus.

"Don was a great man and a very faithful Christian," says the rector of St Stephen's, Willoughby, the Rev Prash Colombage. "In a part of Sydney where faith was often pretty nominal, he had a real and enduring faith in the Lord."

One of Mr McPhail's long-term ministries was Scripture teaching, and Mr Colombage says a church warden in the parish, now in her early 30s, was taught Scripture by Mr McPhail at Artarmon Public School.

"She comes from a non-Christian family, so someone like Don was crucial to her faith," he says. "She would write him questions and he would write an answer and give it to her the following week."

Mr Phail's family home was across the road from St Stephen's. His family had attended the local Baptist church and were expecting to move away, so they said their farewells – only to discover that they didn't need to leave.

The awkwardness of returning was resolved by Mr McPhail who, at the age of eight, simply decided to cross the road and join the Anglicans.

Once a member of St Stephen's, he served the parish and its people for the rest of his life. As superintendent of the Sunday school for 30 years, he arranged programs for different age groups and the training of new teachers, as well as teaching classes himself.

Dr David Jackson joined the Sunday school in 1956, and recalls two church halls packed with hundreds of children, and being taught by Mr McPhail from Year 3 all the way through to Year 9.

"I remember doing Trowel Bible curriculum and Bible exams and competitions, and then Navigators Bible studies," he says. "Don ran all of that and had a profound impact on the lives of many of us. In 2007 a group of us got together to take him out to dinner to say 'Thank you'. We are now in our seventies and still benefiting from his ministry."

"He is one of the humble servants who quietly impacted the lives of thousands of children for Christ through the cultural turmoil of the '60s and '70s."

Dr Jackson used to meet up annually with Mr McPhail when they were both Synod representatives. A well-known face at Synod, Mr McPhail represented Willoughby for 38 years before "retiring" from the role at the age of 90.

"Men like Don were God's instruments," Dr Jackson says.

Patsy Cooper moved to Willoughby with her family in 1963, taught Sunday school with Mr McPhail and was a member of a committee he ran for three decades that organised an annual Anzac memorial service at the church – a major event for which he was recognised with a



Faithful: Don McPhail, aged 90, at his final Synod in 2018.

council award in 2010.

She says that Mr McPhail also ran a Bible study for people in his age group, which began meeting weekly when they were the senior fellowship at St Stephen's, and continued until they were seniors.

"Don was deeply committed

to his Christian beliefs," Ms Cooper says. "He was absolutely devoted to the Lord and anxious to convey that belief to others, which would have come through his teaching and his student instruction and boys' club and fellowship gathering and Bible studies."

SC



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For further information and details on making an application, please visit anglicancg.org.au/rector-curtin-parish

Action on anti-semitism

Russell Powell

Archbishop Kanishka Raffel and the Bishop of South Sydney, Michael Stead, have held consultations with Jewish and other faith leaders, as well as Government, as anti-semitism reaches a new level.

The firebombing of cars, graffiti hate attacks on homes and synagogues in Sydney's east, and most recently the arson attack on a preschool in Maroubra, have created fear in Jewish communities.

A week before the preschool attack, Archbishop Raffel had condemned vandalism at the Allawah and Newtown synagogues as reprehensible and utterly unacceptable.

"Any attack on a place of worship is an attack on the principles of freedom of religion, association and conscience, which are foundational for our multicultural and cohesive community," the Archbishop said in his fourth public statement since the crisis began.

"The Christian Scriptures give no warrant whatsoever for such hateful acts. Rather, Jesus commanded his followers to love our neighbours as ourselves. Sydney Anglicans welcome and affirm the presence and contribution of Jewish Australians for whom Sydney is the home we share."

Just before the attack at the preschool, Archbishop Raffel joined with the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Anthony Fisher, and Greek Orthodox Archbishop Makarios Griniezakis, in a rare joint statement in *The Australian* newspaper.

The archbishops expressed the hope that the ceasefire in the Middle East might hold.



Yet another attack: fire damage at the Only About Children centre in Maroubra.

"Together with many others, we hope and pray that it does, and that this might be the beginning of a sustained peace in a region so often marred by war and human suffering – Jesus' homeland and the 'Holy Land' for Jews, Christians and Muslims," they said.

"There is no place for any type of religious or racially motivated hatred in Australia. Anti-Semitism is a particularly egregious form of discrimination."

Less than 24 hours later, the arson attack on a Maroubra childcare centre was similarly condemned by the NSW Faith Affairs Council, which is chaired by Bishop Stead.

"To specifically target a childcare centre, to threaten the safety of innocent children, is horrifying," the council's statement said.

"Acts of hatred are not acts of religion. We condemn anti-Semitism. We condemn hatred directed against any community in Australia. We call on religious and community leaders to condemn this anti-religious act of violence, and proactively promote harmony and understanding across our multicultural and multifaith communities.

"We will be working with the NSW Government over the coming weeks to review stronger legislation."

St Andrew's Cathedral in the centre of Sydney was also graffitied after the statement by Archbishop Raffel appeared in the newspaper.

"Our Cathedral suffered some anti-Semitic and hateful graffiti overnight, which has been promptly removed and reported to the police," said the Dean, Sandy Grant. "It is, of course, nothing compared to the vile graffiti and arson attacks suffered by Jewish synagogues and adjacent to Jewish homesteads in our city.

"We also continue to pray regularly for the peace of our city and for areas affected by terrorism, warfare and violence around the world." SC

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Triple celebration for Chilean Anglicans

Russell Powell

Supporters from across the globe have travelled to the Chilean capital Santiago for a threefold ceremony, which Anglican Aid CEO and former missionary to Chile, the Rev Canon Tim Swan, has called an "Anglican blockbuster event".

The occasion was the retirement of Héctor (Tito) Zavala as Primate of Chile, the consecration of Juan Esteban Saravia as Bishop of Santiago, and the installation of Bishop Enrique Lago as Primate of Chile.

Sydney Anglicans have had strong links with ministry in Chile through Moore College, the Church Missionary Society and Anglican Aid.

Bishop Zavala (who at one stage was also Presiding Bishop of the Southern Cone – a South American region) took a sabbatical at Moore College in 2001. He returned to Chile to serve as Archbishop and Primate, and to initiate the Centre for Pastoral Studies (CEP), where many CMS missionaries have served – including Canon Swan with his wife Sally, Michael and Jo Charles, Stephen and Rebecca Shead and Gary and Julie Haddon.

From CEP, students have gone



Celebration the retiring Primate of Chile, Tito Zavala (right), presents the new Bishop of Santiago, Juan Esteban Saravia, to the acclamation of the crowd.

on to lead Anglican churches across Chile, in neighbouring countries, and further afield.

One of CEP's graduates is Juan Esteban Saravia who, together with his wife Carolina, was a student of the Charles' and Swans. After graduation, Saravia planted Christ the Redeemer church, together with the Swans, in the suburb of Ñuñoa. He went on to study for a Masters of Divinity at Trinity School for Ministry in Pittsburgh, sponsored by Anglican Aid.

Canon Swan attended the event in January, along with the international director of CMS Australia, the Rev Canon Peter Sholl, and Bishop Malcolm

Richards, Sydney's Bishop for International Relations. The chairman of Gafcon, Archbishop Laurent Mbanda, and Anglican leaders from across Latin America, were also present.

"The consecration ceremony highlighted the fruit of CMS's long-term investment in CEP," Canon Swan says. "A large proportion of Chilean clergy are now under 50, and new churches are being planted, bearing testimony to Bishop Zavala's constant admonition to his Church to 'move from maintenance mode to mission mode'."

The new primate, Bishop Enrique Lago, is also known

to Sydney Anglicans from visits to Australia. He gave an impassioned address to the assembly on the priority of upholding the Bible as the word of God in the church.

In the farewell for Archbishop Tito his ministry was recognised as globally significant.

Service leader Bishop Alfredo Cooper noted that, "The legacy of Archbishop Héctor Zavala is that of a man characterised by maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

"He exercised his ministry with humility to listen, patience to resolve conflicts, pastoral love to edify his flock, and steadfast convictions to defend the truth of the gospel of Christ. These qualities earned him respect and recognition both in Chile and in the global Anglican Communion."

In an address, drawing on 2 Cor 4:7, the newly consecrated Bishop Saravia humbly told the congregation, "I want to tell you that I am a jar of clay. And you see all these bishops and clergy all dressed up in their robes? We are jars of clay. You are jars of clay. We are all broken vessels.

"It is only in Jesus, whom we all need, that we are restored, built up, healed and saved." SC

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Archbishop writes

Hope for Sydney



Kanishka Raffel

The Buddhist faith in which I was raised as a child teaches rebirth. The Christian faith into which, by God's grace, I was rescued, teaches that you must be born again. So, it could sound like these two faiths have something in common. But in fact, this is not so.

The "rebirth" taught by the Buddhist faith says that, after death, you are born into another lifetime. It's called rebirth because the life into which you are reborn depends on the life you have lived – what you sow in one life you reap in your next life.

I recall an elderly relative suffering in hospital after being hit by a motorcycle, plaintively asking, "What did I do to deserve this?" He believed that his suffering was his "karma" – something sown in a past life – but he didn't know what, and he didn't know why. Tragically and poignantly, his was a "hopeless" rebirth.

In contrast, the apostle Peter writes to God's "elect strangers" – chosen by God but rejected by the world – and encourages them (in 1 Peter 1:3-4) that they have a "new birth into a living hope". It is birth into a life now and into eternity that is the gift of God – not something we earn or deserve, but given by God. It is a living hope because it is founded in the mercy of God, guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus and focused on an imperishable inheritance kept safe for us in heaven.

It is a new birth by the mercy of God – not according to what we deserve, but according to his own kindness and love. Not according to justice, but according to mercy. Our new birth, unlike the rebirth of Eastern philosophy, does not depend on what we have sown in "previous lives", but on what Jesus has "sown" in his death and resurrection. By his death, Jesus pays the penalty that is due for our sin, and his resurrection is a precursor to our own resurrection:

[God] has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).

The new birth of the Christian is a birth into hope because our evil has been atoned for in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In our culture, "hope" can be a very weak word. To say that we hope for something is the same as to say "I wish". But in the

Bible, hope is a sure expectation, a confident anticipation. In the Bible, hope stands alongside faith and love as the indestructible and indispensable markers of the Christian person. Not things that we strive for – but the gifts that God gives us on the basis of the work that Jesus has completed.

Just as an executed will gives rise to a sure expectation of an inheritance, so the resurrection of Jesus from the dead gives rise to our sure expectation of life with God, which begins now but only comes into its fullness in the future. An inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for us.

The elect people of God are marked in the world as strangers because we are people who live for an imperishable inheritance in a culture that implicitly and explicitly treats what is passing, fading and perishing as most important.

When there are so many goods and entertainments to be acquired and experienced, then the dynamic that increasingly drives the world is being able to generate enough money in a sufficiently compressed amount of time to be able to squeeze into the time that remains the stuff that money can buy.

We spend now and pay back three times as much later; we have little time for relationships with people that don't involve some benefit for us; relationships are commodified and made secondary to acquisition, consumption and the attainment of "life goals". We're pressed for time, we're pressed for money and we're desperate to have as much of the best of everything as soon and as often as we can.

In so many ways, Sydney is a place of transient trinkets, hollow promises and glittering voids. But everywhere there is havoc, destroyed lives and despair; epidemics of gambling, loneliness, immorality and exploitation. But by the mercy of God, there is new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead into an imperishable inheritance.

Here is the shape of the salvation in which Peter wants to encourage his readers to stand fast (1 Peter 5:12). Here is the gospel of hope that we live to make known to our friends, family and community in Sydney and beyond.

SC

“Whose service is perfect freedom”



Tony Payne

A *S* I write this at the fag end of 2024, weariness has started to settle over me like a fog. There is not so much a spring in my step as a shuffle. I catch the bleary eye of other end-of-year sufferers and give a tired, understanding nod.

Was the end of the year like that for you, dear *Southern Cross* reader?

Whether it was or not, you are reading this in the bright, new dawn of 2025. Hopefully your step has recovered its spring and your eye its sparkle. God willing, you are crouched at the starting blocks ready to dash excitedly into a new year of church and work and ministry and Bible study and family life and everything.

But I wonder. Does gearing up for another year in harness fill

you with enthusiasm? Or has the weariness of late 2024 not quite dissipated?

Or perhaps it's not really a question of lack of energy or a hangover of December weariness. Perhaps your enthusiasm for church and ministry and serving others is just generally depleted these days. Perhaps it's all become a bit of a chore. You gird your loins as another year gets under way, but it doesn't fill you with anything like the joy of your latest Netflix addiction or food obsession.

I was pondering these matters this morning when Thomas Cranmer broke into my thoughts and changed them. Or at least, I assume it was Cranmer, if he indeed wrote the prayer that I prayed this morning from *The Book of Common Prayer*. You may know it, in its somewhat modernised version, from *An Australian Prayer Book*:

O God, the author and lover of peace, in knowledge of whom stands our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom; defend us your servants in all assaults of our enemies, that, surely trusting in your defence, we may not fear the power of any adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"Whose service is perfect freedom". That's not how I tend to think about service or freedom.

To serve others is good and right. It's a privilege to serve, we say. And service can be very rewarding, especially if we are blessed with seeing the fruit of it. But service as a kind of freedom? Those are not ideas I am used to putting together.

To be free is surely to be free of the obligation to serve; to not have to roll up my sleeves and work for others. Freedom is what we've all hopefully just had a brief taste of, in that week away at Hawks Nest, with the phone and the email off, with no watch on the wrist and no agenda for each day. Holidays are freedom.

FREEDOM AND SERVICE RECONSIDERED

The start of the new church and ministry year is when freedom stops and serving begins. Or at least, that's how I often think of it.

But in those graceful clauses that so often introduce his prayers, Cranmer reconfigures how we think about service and freedom. He says three things about the God we pray to: that he is the author and lover of peace, that our eternal life depends on knowing him, and that slavery to him is freedom itself.

They're all connected.

In the first phrase, God is the divine, loving author who does something completely novel – he graciously reconciles his enemies to himself, making peace by the blood of the cross. He loves and authors peace. His enemies were once not only cut off from but ignorant of him, as blind and lost as moles groping about in the daylight. But now that the author and lover of peace has given us peace with himself, we *know* him, and knowing him means knowing the eternal life that he brings.

In fact, this is eternal life, as Jesus once prayed, "that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

The first two clauses of Cranmer's prayer set up the third. If this is who God is – the one who has lovingly authored peace through his Son, the one who has rescued us from the prison of our ignorance and hostility and granted us to have eternal life in knowing him – then to be a grateful subject and servant of this God is to be free indeed.

We're no longer slaves to the law, or slaves to our own passions, or slaves to the evil one who rules the dominion of darkness. We're

free from all of it. As Paul reminds the wavering Galatians: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1).

In fact, I wonder if Cranmer had Galatians in the back of his mind when he penned this memorable prayer about the perfect freedom of serving God. Paul's letter is all about the liberation of slaves through the gospel, and the folly of going back to slavery again (by placing yourself under the servitude of the law).

TRUE FREEDOM

Christ has won us a smashing freedom from condemnation and from the curse of the law, says Paul. So live free! And this freedom is not for selfishness or self-indulgence. That would be to fall back into slavery to our passions and pleasures. Our new freedom in Christ is a freedom to be a slave to others:

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love (Gal 5:13).

Being truly free means serving other people in love. How is that "freedom"?

We are used to thinking of freedom as the absence of restraint. I regard myself as free when there are no limits placed upon me as to what I can think or say or do. But of course, that understanding of freedom is incoherent and impossible. It doesn't account for the personal, physical and social limitations that are part of all created life. It paints us as a kind of individualistic Superman, for whom nothing is impossible if we were only freed from the petty constraints other people place upon us.

But of course, we are hemmed in by multiple factors: what we are physically capable of, what we are mentally and emotionally capable of, what resources and possibilities are open to us in our

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15 February | 8:00 am



Women's Prayer Group
10 March
10:00 am



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social context, what we can stomach or contemplate doing – given the moral vision of the world we have inherited from our upbringing and society – and so on.

Freedom is much more than lack of constraint. It always has *content*. It's a vision of something good that I am currently being prevented from possessing or enjoying. When in prison, the longing for freedom is the longing to be able to walk around in the open air, to live in my own home, to have some agency over how I spend my time. All of these "goods" are taken away in prison, and I long to be free to enjoy them again.

Holidays are freedom because they are an extended opportunity to enjoy the good of *rest*. Serving other people is freedom because it is participating in and enjoying the good thing we were created to do: to love the people around us.

When we were slaves to our foolish, sinful, dying selves – to "the flesh" as Paul calls it – our desires and longings were all self-centred and self-destructive. There's a grim catalogue of these evil desires a few verses later in Galatians 5: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

This is un-freedom. This is being trapped inside the prison of our own folly and selfishness, while the pure, sweet air of freedom is denied to us. And the content of that freedom – the good things we enjoy and embrace and walk in as the Holy Spirit brings them forth in us – are also listed a few verses later: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

OUR ULTIMATE GOOD

Serving others in love is freedom, because it is the supremely good thing we were created to do. We are most freely ourselves – we are most human – when, like Jesus, the ultimate human, we lay down our lives in love for others.

Now, I must confess I've shifted ground a little bit from Cranmer's prayer. He was not talking about the freedom of serving others, but about our relationship with God, whose service is perfect freedom.

And this is even better. To love and serve other people is the good thing we were created for. But to love and serve God is the *ultimately good* thing we were created for. The most perfect freedom is the freedom to stand before God as the person he created and redeemed us to be – as someone who grateful and joyfully bows before him, and who praises him for he grants foolish rebels to be at peace with him and to know him.

A new year of serving and loving others in all the many spheres of our lives is a new year of confidence and joy in the greatest good: to know and be at peace with God, whose service is perfect freedom. **SC**



The Rev Dr Tony Payne is director of the Centre for Christian Living and lectures in Christian Thought at Moore College.



Insight

Why your church is and isn't a welcoming place

Emily*

ast year, I was looking for a new church. As I visited different churches, I noticed what made me feel welcomed and what made me feel uncomfortable. Here are some of the lessons I learned.

CONVERSATIONS CAN MAKE OR BREAK A VISIT

The most helpful thing was any person who was willing to talk to me. It sounds like the most simple thing but at some churches I visited, I left wondering, "Why won't anyone speak to me?"

Welcoming teams are great, but welcoming is not exclusively their job. Welcoming is not a system that belongs to your welcoming team. It's about everyone in the church. Every single person in your church is a welcomer.

It didn't matter if people were awkward or didn't know what to say, or that everyone had asked me the same questions. Someone being willing to talk to me was the difference between feeling welcomed and feeling invisible.

I'm an early person. I like to arrive at places early, especially if I'm new. I don't know what the parking will be like, for example. But at every church that I visited, even if I was only arriving two or three minutes early, I was walking into an empty building.

Usually "the welcomers" were outside, which makes sense. And quite often, congregation members were outside chatting, which meant that the interior of the church was empty. As a visitor, the idea of joining in one of those conversations was very uncomfortable, but if I sat inside there was no one to speak to me.

One of the most awkward times were those few minutes in the service when you are told to turn and speak to someone near you.



Most of the time, no one would speak to me.

The next most awkward time was the 30 seconds immediately after the service finished. If no one has spoken to me in that time, I'm not waiting. I'm leaving. Standing around, on my own, waiting to see if someone will talk to me, was just too awkward and overwhelming. Even though I'm a Christian and was actively looking for a church community to be part of, I didn't have it in me to wait any longer.

PRIORITISE PEOPLE OVER PROCESS

This is not a criticism of the welcoming systems, but parts of them can be off-putting. Some things that were poorly received included asking for all of my details within the first minute of me showing up, not allowing me to refuse a name tag, and receiving form emails.

A "Great to meet you" email doesn't feel good when it's from a member of the ministry team you've never spoken to. It's obvious they've got a great system, but people want to connect with people.

Sometimes the email would come from a person who wasn't even at church on the Sunday I visited. The gospel is relational and personal. Shouldn't our ministry be relational and personal, too?

WHY I CHOSE MY CHURCH OUT OF THE MANY I VISITED

The church I'm at now did things differently. Nobody asked me to put my details into a system. Please understand, this is not a criticism of the system! It just shouldn't be the first thing someone talks to a visitor about.

I stood outside and talked to one of the women who was on

welcoming, and then she walked inside with me, kept talking to me and introduced me to someone else. I didn't have those moments where I wasn't sure what to do. After the service, someone sitting in front of me immediately turned around and said hello. It was the immediacy of being spoken to and not feeling awkward.

The second time I visited, a couple who I hadn't met came and introduced themselves saying, "We saw you sitting alone and that's not right!". It's the little things. More often than not, it was a member of the congregation looking to connect.

After visiting, I received a text message from someone I had chatted to. They referenced our conversation from Sunday and that was very impactful.

HOW CAN I MAKE A VISITOR FEEL WELCOME?

One way is to be inside the church building a few minutes early. The people inside the building five minutes before church are usually the musicians, ministry staff and visitors. So I'm trying each Sunday to be at church five minutes early and be inside, looking out for those who are visiting and talking to them.

Once church finishes, it can be very awkward for a new person. Now, I think: what can I do to help someone in those first 30 seconds after the service ends? Help them get a hot drink – a lot of churches now have coffee, but you might not know it's free when you're visiting.

My prayer is for those considering how they can help welcome people, that they would be brave enough to go and say "Hello" and start a conversation. That's the most impactful thing. **SC**

**not her real name*



Talking points

Positive masculinity

Sandy Grant

In the latter half of 2024, Australia's first Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner, Micaela Cronin, handed down her first report to Federal Parliament on the progress of the Government's national plan to end violence against women and children.

She said the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) reported that, in the 12 months to June 2024, 43 women were victims of intimate partner homicide, compared with 34 the previous year. While we may have seen a not-insignificant decline in homicides over the past three decades, it is distressing to see a jump of 25 per cent or more in *intimate partner* homicide for two straight years.

"We know that these numbers do not show the full extent of lives lost and harm done," Commissioner Cronin said. "Many more women and children are living with the terrible impact of gender-based violence every day... Every life lost is one too many. Every person who lives with the ongoing impact of domestic, family or sexual violence requires us to strive to do better."

Although gender-based inequality is undoubtedly a huge driver for domestic violence, Ms Cronin noted that statistics now include "the first generation to grow up exposed to violent pornography and misogyny online in a way that has never been seen before", adding that it was important to acknowledge the impact of alcohol and other drugs, gambling, and pornography: "There are now calls to have serious, evidence-based discussions about the role these

factors have on violence and what levers the government can use to mitigate them".

Significantly, Ms Cronin has also urged governments to help redefine masculinity and engage with men effectively. "We need to have eyes on men in different ways than we do now," she said – adding that she is consistently told by women to "please work with our men" and that data uncovering how men *become* violent and *stop* being violent was desperately needed.

We need to reflect on all this as Christians. I write as one who, over the past decade, has led the development of the Sydney Anglican policy on responding well to domestic abuse. I also believe in the biological reality that men and women are not identical and interchangeable.

Yet, as our Creator says, men and women are made equally in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). And so, unsurprisingly, the gospel offer of Jesus Christ comes to men and women equally. We are all sinners, and we may all receive forgiveness and hope through trusting Christ and his atoning death and resurrection. And most instructions for Christian living are applied equally to men and women.

But in considering the commissioner's invitation to address masculinity, I thought I would mention a few places where the Bible speaks to men in particular. For example, Paul says to men (using the specific word for male, not the generic for humankind),

Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing (1 Timothy 2:8).

He seems to identify a typical temptation for men towards aggro, which may lead to abusive words or, maybe, even physical violence, if they raise their hands as fists. Instead, the godly masculine alternative is to pray. Of course, all women are invited to pray too, and it certainly makes sense if tempted towards anger.

No social media flame wars. No shouting. None of the threats that your strength might permit you to get away with. But prayer. That's what a real Christian man does. Likewise, the same older leader instructs the younger male pastor, Timothy, this way:

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

Men are never to treat women as objects. You are to think how you would like your sister or mother to be treated, and treat all women that way. That's biblical masculinity. Not demanding your rights. Not claiming ownership. Not demeaning women by sexist or sexual joking.

Paul instructs another regional Christian overseer, Titus, with regard to men this way (and he has instructions for women in the same context):

Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance... Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled (Titus 2:2,6).

Here are some positive traits for men (and women) to pursue, and we could add others such as humility, patience and gentleness, which are fruits of the Spirit.

But these verses are also a warning that you can never excuse poor treatment of women or children by claiming a loss of control. That does not wash with God. I have been writing about this for

years – for example, an opinion piece on domestic violence in *The Sydney Morning Herald* a decade ago on loving your wife and never being harsh with her.

It still astonishes me that Christian men get sucked into thinking that the heart of masculinity is being an “alpha”, or aggression, or sexual domination, or getting others to submit to you, or throwing your weight around.

Stay away from “influencers” who promote or condone such behaviour. Such strength as you have is always to be used in love and service of others. This may mean being courageous and strong enough to speak up against ungodly expressions of masculinity or in defence of women who are being demeaned.

Women should also never feel spiritually obliged to submit to violence or coercive control in a relationship. The Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission's report on *The Use and Misuse of Scripture with Regard to Domestic Abuse* begins with these words:

Some people use Bible verses as an excuse to abuse their wife, husband or children. This is always wrong. Others think that the Bible tells them to put up with abuse. This is also wrong.

Yes, there is something to say for encouraging men to take positive initiatives. And God's word gives good guidance on the sort of things for men to take the initiative in: prayer, purity, and self-control; and Christian faith, love and endurance.

Whether expressed by a personality that's loud or quiet, serious or playful, sporty or arty etc., these attributes are, I believe, attractive and will adorn your walk with Christ. **SC**



The Very Rev Sandy Grant is the Dean of St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney.



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Why I want to teach SRE

Tara Sing

Last year the number of students enrolled in Special Religious Education was the highest it had been in five years. More than 350,000 students were signed up for SRE classes of all faiths across NSW – 200,000 of them in Sydney. Christian Scripture makes up two-thirds of that figure.

With so many families choosing for their children to participate in Scripture classes, the need for people to volunteer as teachers is greater than ever. We asked three teachers how they make time in their week to teach SRE and why they value it so highly.

On a day off from my teaching job, I teach Scripture

Helga Sheahan

New Life Oran Park

When my youngest daughter started school, I began teaching Scripture. I worked part-time as a primary school teacher while I had my kids at home, and my employers were gracious and allowed me to continue part-time. I thought, while we're able to make ends meet, this is a good opportunity to give that time to Scripture teaching.

As a teacher by trade, I felt I had the skills, the time and there was a need. In my heart I felt it was where my gifts naturally led me to go. When would be a better time to start Scripture teaching than now?

Growing up, I remember Scripture classes at school – it's such an important part of school life. Now I teach Scripture one day a week. I set aside the whole day to plan and prepare and teach my classes, then I work for the remainder of the week.

Being a primary teacher has been such a blessing to my Scripture teaching. I don't need to worry about the other things a classroom teacher has to worry about, like reports or classroom management as much. I just go in and teach what I love!

I had up to 60 students at one point in one of my classes, which had its challenges! But it was also such a joy. We had them all in the library for lessons, and I taught whoever wanted to be enrolled. When the numbers came in, I was very apprehensive. I didn't feel like I could do it. But God is a good

God, he answers prayers, and now I don't feel like I ever want to stop teaching Scripture.

I was lucky to keep the same class for two years, through Year 1 and Year 2. In that time, I was able to see their understanding grow of how the Bible is one big story that points to Jesus. I would teach a story, and students would put their hand up and say, "That ties back to Abraham's promise!"

To see over two years how they went from not knowing much about the Bible to having a better understanding of how it works, and how much Jesus loves them, was very encouraging!

As we start the 2025 school year, please pray that we would have good relationships with the schools where we teach, and that principals and co-ordinators of SRE would be supportive and willing to work with us. Pray that there will be enough teachers to support the number of students enrolled, and pray that God would bless the work Scripture teachers do.



Our mums' Bible study all trained to be SRE teachers

Ally Chan

Arise Anglican Church, Castle Hill

To be honest, teaching Scripture was not something I thought about. I'm not a teacher by trade – I work in health IT.

For me, the journey and experience of Scripture teaching started with our church Mums and Bubs Bible study group. We do weekly studies during the term, and in Term 3 of 2023 we did SRE accreditation.

At that time, I was pregnant with my second child and didn't think much about the SRE training. It was just part of what we did in our Bible study group, and this made it easy to gain the extra qualification.

When the group started teaching Scripture at the beginning of 2024, we had a team of teachers, helpers, babysitters and volunteers who generously cooked to feed the team, but when we started my baby was only four months old – too young for me to leave. So, instead of teaching, when I was able I helped to babysit the kids of mothers who had gone off to teach Scripture.

A few months later, we lost one of our helpers. I thought, "My daughter is eight months old now, she will be with her older sibling and our church family", so I left them with the other mums who were babysitting the kids and started helping with a class.

The system of having people babysit the kids of Scripture teachers worked really well. I knew it was a safe environment, and it wasn't a very long time to leave the kids.

The decision to help with a class in Term 2 was a bit daunting, but the anxieties quickly dissipated because God is in control.

The team our church had set up by God's grace made helping teach a class and managing the students easier.

For the rest of the year I got to watch the students grow and be involved in the lesson; I got to see them learn and answer questions, memorise Bible verses and learn songs, and say the Lord's Prayer. Those things made me marvel at how much kids can understand and remember. I'm just a teacher they see once a week for 40 minutes, but they are able to learn a lot from the Bible.

I started because there was a need and opportunity, but it has been really enjoyable. There is such a big need for Scripture teachers and, now that I have my own children, I find myself thinking about what they and other kids learn at school. God is so important. In a public school, it's important that students have the option to learn about him, too.

I use my kids as a sounding board when I prepare lessons. I prepare at night, and then do a run-through of the lesson the day before with my kids. It's amazing how God has used this as an avenue to not only grow my own knowledge but teach my kids and kids at school.

SRE accreditation and teaching may have started with our mums' group, but it quickly expanded to include people working from home and uni students.

It has been so encouraging to work as a team to teach Scripture in our local community. We're not alone in doing this. I wouldn't be able to do it without the support of my church.



A growing group: the SRE teachers, with their kids, from Arise Anglican Church in Castle Hill.

Good and faithful servants



The Lord calls us and uses us in many ways over our lives. As these saints showcase, there is no slowing down when it comes to the work of the Lord.

In many churches, the vibrant and active service of older members can play out quietly in the background, yet the impact of their ministry ripples through the whole church community. In this collection of testimonies, we want to celebrate the fruit these saints are bearing, and be reminded that the body of Christ is enriched and strengthened by the contributions of all its members, from the youngest cub to the oldest disciple.

from page 23

COVID allowed me to start teaching Scripture

Hendru Lagerweij

Grace Anglican Church, Gledswood Hills

I started teaching Scripture just after the lockdown finished. It all happened because of COVID.

I'm a project draftsman, so all I really need is a computer and the internet, and my work noticed we were efficient at home as well. Living in Gregory Hills, the commute to my office is an hour and 20 minutes, one way. When they said I could work from home, I grabbed the opportunity!

At the same time I began working from home, our minister sent out an email asking if anyone would consider becoming an SRE teacher. I thought, "If SRE falls on the same day that I'm working from home, that would be ideal!" So I grabbed that opportunity as well, and used my lunch break to teach Scripture. I started in August 2020 and have been teaching ever since.

When I'm working from home, I can make my day suited to what I need. I start quite early, at 5.30am, take

my breaks whenever, and Scripture is a bit later in the day. Once a month I have a company-wide meeting that I need to attend online, so I rush home to log on in time.

When I started teaching, I taught Year 3 and 4. Lately, I have been teaching Kindergarten. Kindy is really interesting – most of the Kindy kids don't know much about the Bible. They've heard little bits about God, so teaching them gives lots of refreshing insights and it's really fun.

I enjoy occasionally seeing the kids outside of the school environment and getting to meet their families. A few times when I took my daughter to gymnastics class after school, a parent came up to me, a bit confused, and said, "My daughter says that you are her teacher". I thought, "Am I?" Then I saw the girl and said, "Oh yeah! I'm her Scripture teacher". From there we had nice conversations.

When I'm walking in the town centre, I hear, "Hey Mr L!" and it's one of my Scripture kids. When I walk into the school to pick up my children, I have kids from previous Scripture classes come up and have a chat with me. It's a good feeling.

I grew up in Holland and went to a Christian school. In the mornings we started with singing and Christian stories. I'm happy to do SRE and bring Christian stories to the kids who opt in at my local school. Please pray that the Kindy kids who I teach will understand what I am trying to teach them and will hold onto those truths.



NORMA JACQUES

Finished her Moore College Preliminary Theological Certificate at 86

“If I could start at 74, and do it for the past 12 years, anyone can do it – and if God’s calling you to study his word so that you know more about him, and so that you can serve him better, please take that opportunity. I’ve never regretted the time that I have spent learning about our God.”



VIC WESTNEAT

Baptised at 99

The Rev Martin Symons had the privilege of baptising 99-year-old Vic Westneat in 2021. The former chaplain at Anglicare’s Farrer Brown Court in Castle Hill baptised Mr Westneat along with a fellow resident, 77-year-old Don Greentree.



“Vic said, ‘Why has it taken so long for me to come to God? It’s taken 99 years for me to know God!’ And I said, ‘That’s the thing, mate – it’s never too late.’”

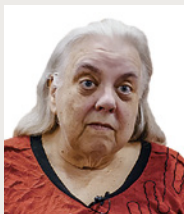
For Mr Symons, these baptisms highlight perfectly what Jesus talks about in the parable of the workers from Matthew 20. Some join in the work in the last hour of the day, “yet they all get paid the same: [they all get] eternal life”.

Now 103, Mr Westneat might be attending church in a wheelchair, but he still takes part in as many church and social activities as he can – and he still loves Jesus!

NORMA ESLER

The longest-serving member of St Mark’s, Sadleir

“I’ve been there since 1962 as a teenager, so that means over 62 years! I became a Synod rep in 1992, so that means serving on Synod for 32 years. Pray for God to continue to guide us at St Mark’s, to continue to help us find the finances we need to continue to grow the ministry, and particularly with the young children. The other week at evening church, we had 39 adults and 37 under-12s!”



ROBERT TONG

A long-term Synod member

“I was in Marcus Loane’s first Synod when he was archbishop, so that was about 1966 or ’67. I had three years away in England, came back in ’76 and have been a member of Synod ever since. [What’s encouraged me over the years] I think, is people looking at ministry and the expansion of the gospel across Sydney. Synod does policy and sets legal frameworks – all of that should undergird ministry.”



BOB DORAN

85, began a weekly doorknocking ministry 15 years ago

“Every time you’ve got time and opportunity to [doorknock] is a time and opportunity which, if you don’t do it, is lost forever, because you can never take back yesterday. If we capitalise on every opportunity, we know we’ve done what we could do for the Lord in that particular time. And you get to like it after a while and feel rotten if you don’t go!



“Sometimes you strike a person in distress, and you can give them the right message to help them. It might not solve their physical or material problems but it might help them spiritually, and in some cases they can receive the Lord.”



GORDON AND JEAN ROBINSON

Prayer for matters local and global

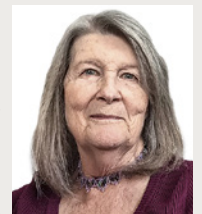
For almost 25 years, the Robinsons have begun each day in prayer, praying for mission organisations, friends, family and world issues. “We finish our prayer time with a chapter from God’s word,” Mr Robinson says.

In the evenings, they focus on praying for the persecuted church. “It’s good to talk to God about all things... he understands and he answers prayer, so we should pray! There have been times when family and missionary friends have expressed appreciation because of the peace and assurance they have experienced knowing that we, and others, have been praying for them.”

JULIE REYNOLDS

Daily Bible reading for almost 50 years

“I’m in my eighties, a widow and live by myself. I have plenty of time to read the Bible. I get up in the morning, make myself a cup of tea and for the next hour and 30 minutes I read my Bible, read devotions and pray. I feel very privileged to have the time to do that.



“My first minister encouraged me in daily Bible reading. He said, ‘If you want to know somebody, you talk to them. If you want to know God, you read the Bible. That’s God talking to you.’ The sentiment was that reading your Bible as a Christian was absolutely essential and I took that on board. Even though my children were [young], I still had a little time in the morning before they got up. So I just started reading in the morning. I’ve been reading the Bible in the morning for almost 50 years.”

JOHN

Came to Christ in his seventies

“John was brought up in the church but wandered away in his late teens. He’d been a well-seasoned traveller and man of the world, but I take it there was a seed planted in his earlier years. John was a regular at men’s breakfast, accepted an invitation to the Alpha group, and has been part of that group now for 2½ years. There has been more than one occasion when John has been in tears in church because he understands how deep God’s love is and how rich his grace is.



“John loves to open his Bible and has joined a Bible study group. He has also appreciated the way people have prayed for him. John’s journey to Jesus is a story some 60 years in the making.”

- as told by the Rev Marty Davis, rector of Sussex Inlet



Bringing the epistles to life for young readers

Tara Sing

For the Rev Matt Dodd, senior minister at Lakemba and one half of the duo behind *The Epistles for Kids*, the journey of the books began with a simple yet challenging question: “How do I teach Colossians to kids?”

Mr Dodd was a children’s minister at the time and wanted to link the lessons at kids’ church with the current sermon series. However, he found existing children’s bibles overly simplified or ill-suited to younger readers. His solution? Create a primary-aged resource to faithfully translate and visually bring to life the riches of Paul and Peter’s letters.

Mr Dodd first attempted to adapt Colossians for his church’s kids ministry, producing a simple translation over a few weeks. The process opened his eyes to the unmet need for accessible, faithful and visually engaging resources that bridged the gap between dense scriptural texts and children’s comprehension. Over the next seven years, the idea grew into *The Epistles for Kids*.

By 2023, Mr Dodd had partnered with illustrator Thom Bransdon, and they had a simple yet ambitious goal: to provide a faithful translation of every epistle, paired with insightful illustrations that could act as windows into the historical and theological richness of the early church in the New Testament.

“We genuinely want to open up the Scriptures for kids,” Mr Dodd says. “I looked around, but a resource like this doesn’t exist.”

TRUE TO THE TEXT

The project’s guiding principle is faithfulness to the biblical text. Unlike many children’s bibles that paraphrase extensively, Mr Dodd draws from the original Greek to produce a translation that both remains true to the epistles’ meaning and is accessible to young readers.

“We only use words that kids use in the schoolyard,” he says. “It’s a passion point for both of us that there are no generic images. Every illustration must help communicate the message on that

(opposite, from left) Thom Bransdon and Matt Dodd discuss a planned illustration.



page. We want to do everything we can to help kids gain access to the word of God.”

It’s a highlight of Mr Dodd’s week to sit with Mr Bransdon, brainstorming the best way to capture the depth of the epistles with timeless graphics that aren’t childish.

“We want to show that although the epistles may seem academic, they are actually full of adventure,” he says. “It’s assumed that there is no drama or story here. But the epistles are windows into the most incredible church communities, full of brave apostles and church workers risking everything, and the joy of conversion for people of all backgrounds — all in the context of real, ancient history.”

EXPAND ACCESS TO SCRIPTURE

Ministering in multicultural Lakemba, Mr Dodd sees the potential for these resources to serve more than just children. “The Open Word Project, which is the ministry over the top of *The Epistles for Kids*, has a vision larger than just kids,” he says. “In our context in Lakemba, the pew Bible makes it difficult for low English readers to fellowship richly around the word of God.”

He and Mr Bransdon envision a future where their simplified translations not only support children’s ministries but are also adapted for a more multicultural and global church context. “We want to make this into a resource for the multicultural church in Australia, done by Australians. We also want to give it to the global church.”

DEEP DIVE INTO PETER AND PAUL’S WORDS

For Mr Dodd, translating the epistles into plain language has been an opportunity to slow down and deeply immerse himself in the text.

continued on page 28

From where you'd rather be

Rich Wenden

When I'm at the beach, a phrase I often hear is, "Where else would you rather be?" For a lot of people, living by the beach is their idea of paradise. There is a strong secular hedonism that is pervasive in the culture around suburban coastal contexts. Grippled by lifestyle and materialism, you get a clear idea of where people's hearts are, and what their idea of heaven might be (even those far from the beach are gripped and have their own ideas of heaven).

After 15 years of ministry in this context, I see a lot of distraction. People are happy to talk about religious stuff, but anything beyond that is a challenge. There's so much vying for their attention seven days a week; we can't just put on programs and think that people will rock up to them.

How can churches break through the spiritual hedonism and build relationships with people who wouldn't ordinarily darken the doors of our church? It's not an easy thing to do.

As part of my research for a book, I interviewed the rectors of nine coastal parishes in the Sydney Diocese, from Palm Beach to

Austinmer: a mix of churches – some of whom would consider that they are doing well and others that would say they are struggling – to see what I could learn about sharing Jesus in these contexts.

Parishes doing well tended to be those that got out into their community – and yes, that obviously comes with caveats – but here are some ways for any Christian, anywhere, to take the gospel out of their church and into the suburbs around them.

FAITHFUL PRESENCE

Fostering a faithful presence in every sphere of influence, such as community groups, sports clubs and schools. Churches connecting well are engaging with different pockets of their suburb.

That's what we do in sports chaplaincy. We aim to be a faithful presence and build relationships so that we can have the conversations in the moments that matter, and point people to Jesus. For some people this may feel scary, and that's okay. It's realising that I'm in the same place every day, seeing the same people and thinking, "I could get to know them more".

from page 27

"I feel like I'm meeting Paul and Peter, getting into the way they think and the way they write," he says. "I have the privilege of seeing just how real, personal, heartfelt and everyday normal these letters were in their time. I really want others to experience that, too.

"I don't think the epistles were meant to be as hard as we sometimes feel they are. If we can present them faithfully, but differently, our kids and multicultural church communities will discover truths that are at the very heart and foundation of the Protestant movement. These are the letters that sparked the Reformation! We should want our church communities thriving in them."

Feedback so far has been overwhelmingly positive, with families and ministry workers eagerly anticipating the release

of the books. Many are keen to have a resource that bridges the gap between paraphrased children's books and a full biblical text. "What could be more important than the actual Bible for kids?" Mr Dodd asks.

As they prepare for publication, Mr Dodd is praying for the impact these illustrated epistles will have.

"We've spent enormous time and effort on these – we genuinely want this to serve the church globally," he says. "But we're just two guys in Sydney. Pray that we will be faithful, that this would be the word of God, and that God will send it out." **SC**

The translations of Philippians, Colossians and 1 Peter are due to be released before the end of this year. To stay up to date with the project visit theopenword.com.au



Taking the Saviour to the sand: Seaforth rector the Rev Rich Wenden.

REORDERING DISORDERED LOVES

Theologian and philosopher James K.A. Smith writes on secular cultural liturgies and observes that, deep down, everyone is a worshipper. Around the beach, there's a connection people feel from the moment they walk onto the sand to the moment they dive under the waves. Many talk about the surf as being the "blue-green cathedral".

Smith speaks about reordering people's disordered loves and pointing them to Jesus. That's what we are trying to do with the people we meet.

EMBRACING AN URBAN SPIRITUALITY

What is God up to in your suburb? What are the touch points, or points of vulnerability, that you see around you? This might mean you have to immerse yourself in the suburb. We are one of many communities within the wider community, but we have something more to offer.

We've been doing a prayer walk as a church, walking our suburb and praying for different parts of it. We walk past the school or the retirement village, around the affluent and less affluent areas, and we pray for people. We ask the question: "What is God up to and how can we discern that?"

If God's mission is to see people drawn to him, this is a way of

connecting with people who would not normally walk through the doors of our church but might be keen to engage with different questions.

McCrimble Research's *Faith and Belief* survey showed us that Australians highly value the work of churches that seek to look after the disenfranchised and disadvantaged. As our churches are grounded in what Jesus has done for us, that itself translates into what community and lives and loves centred around Jesus look like.

Embracing that urban spirituality, recognising how we reorder people's disordered loves to point them to Jesus, and fostering that faithful presence in whatever sphere of influence we have – that's for everyone. **SC**

PRAY THAT

- God will show us what he wants from us, our churches and our communities
- our churches can be strong, gospel-driven communities that hold out this word of life
- God will provide opportunities to connect with our community

Rich Wenden is the rector of Seaforth and author of Life This Side of Heaven: Taking the Saviour to the Sand.

Mal York to Moore College

The Rev Malcolm York had planned to stay at St Andrew's, Roseville. He says he and his wife Heather "love the people, and we love the ministry" – but when God has a plan that involves moving, that's what you do.

"I had a friend approach me and ask me if I knew that the Dean of Students role was going at Moore College – a friend who knew that I wanted to get into training ministers in the future," Mr York recalls. "It sounded like something I would be interested in, in two or three years from now. But because the role was available now, I thought, 'I really need to consider it now'.

"So, I went through the interview process and at the very beginning I said, 'I'm not looking for another role; I'm really happy at Roseville, my wife is really happy at Roseville... but this is something I'm interested in doing in the future.'"

When Mr York reached the psychometric testing stage of the interview process, he says with a laugh that he thought that would be the end of his candidacy. However, to his surprise, college vice-principal the Rev Dr Simon Gillham told him that he had the exact personality profile they were looking for.



"I think it's the strongest calling I've ever had to a role," he says. "I feel like God's come and plucked me out of Roseville to do this job. People from college tell me. 'Everyone's excited that you're coming', so from a college perspective I feel very much affirmed that this is the right move, but obviously people at St Andrew's are pretty sad.

"We really love the people at Roseville. We're not leaving them because we want to leave them – we just feel called to this role in ministry."

Mr York is excited that his new role combines Dean of Students with lecturing in ministry, as he has worked in ministries ranging from chaplaincy to church plants to parish rector.

"I've had all these sorts of experiences so I can say to

the students, 'You want to do this? This is what it's like'," he says. "I have been a mentor with MT&D [Ministry Training & Development] on and off for 10 years, have trained pastors in Chile and done PTC courses in India... and this was my motivation for getting involved in training in the future. I was doing it already, so I wanted to do it more!"

The principal of Moore College, the Rev Dr Mark Thompson,

has welcomed the appointment, saying, "Mal is very clearly the right person to be our next Dean of Students. His pastoral warmth, his commitment to training and his long experience in parish ministry all equip him well for this pastoral role.

"I am very grateful that Mal has agreed to take on this important responsibility among us. We are looking forward to Mal, Heather and the family joining us next year."

After the best part of two decades as rector of Greenwich, the Rev Eric Percival retired from the parish on December 10, 2024.

The Rev Chris Conyers has moved from Anglicare chaplaincy, becoming the rector of Newport on January 21.

The Rev Tim Mildenhall has accepted the parish of Asquith-Mt Colah-Mt Kuring-gai and will commence on February 18.

The rector of Caringbah since 2016, the Rev Eric Cheung, will become rector of St Philip's, Eastwood in late February.

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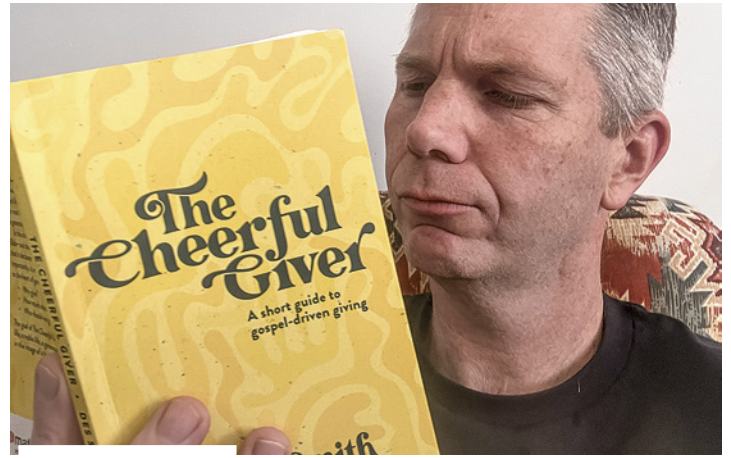
VACANT PARISHES

List of parishes and provisional parishes, vacant or becoming vacant, as at January 21, 2025:

- Bankstown**
- Belmore with McCallums Hill and Clemton Park
- Caringbah
- Cooks River**
- Cranebrook with Castlereagh
- Cremorne
- Darling Street**
- Glebe*
- Greenwich
- Jamberoo
- Helensburgh and Stanwell Park
- Lawson
- Liverpool South
- Oatley**
- Paddington
- Riverwood-Punchbowl
- Rosemeadow*
- Roseville
- St John's Park
- South Coogee

* denotes provisional parishes or Archbishop's appointments
 ** right of nomination suspended/on hold

The don't-stress practice of godly generosity



Tips and reminders: Des Smith with *The Cheerful Giver*.

Judy Adamson

Do you switch off when your church pastor talks about giving? Perhaps you feel guilty, thinking you aren't giving enough, or even resentful because, after all, isn't church about the gospel and growing in Jesus? Should such things even be discussed?

The Rev Des Smith is so sure we should talk about the issues of Christian generosity and giving that, when he was senior pastor of Trinity Church Adelaide, he decided to do a sermon series on the topic. When that was well received, he thought it might work well as a book, and the result is *The Cheerful Giver*.

"I wanted to make clear to people from the outset that this wasn't just about giving to church – this wasn't a fundraising drive disguised as a sermon series!" he says. "It was actually to help people think about giving to all sorts of things, which obviously includes giving to church but isn't limited to that.

"Jesus talks a lot about money in the Bible, and yet at the same time people can be nervous talking about it. Maybe they've had bad experiences but, even if they haven't, I think there's a lot of misunderstanding about what the Bible does and doesn't say about giving and generosity, so it's an important topic for Christians to get their heads around."

The book, which can be read in about an hour, essentially covers three areas in relation to giving: the why, the who and the how much. For the "why", it explains that we should not give out of guilt, or with a prosperity-gospel expectation of receiving something in return. Rather, any kind of giving is meant to be very much a response to God giving to us, and his generosity in all things. As we are gradually transformed more into Jesus' likeness, we will naturally be givers, because we are becoming more like our heavenly Father.

continued on page 32

Archival footage of the Games, the terrorists and ABC broadcasters are blended seamlessly into the action of this tightly scripted thriller, and at just over 90 minutes it won't leave you a moment to rest. Even though the outcome is well known, you remain tied to the action with the characters until the credits roll.

For good or ill, the way ABC covered this event more than 50 years ago helped shape the media's response to future terrorist attacks. Numerous ethical issues arise that are still relevant today (or should be) – such as the balance of public interest with pandering, and truth-telling with trauma. As Mason bluntly asks, "Can we show someone being shot on live television?"

"The second chapter is about how much we should give, which is often a bit of a hot topic for Christians!" Smith says. "I go away from the tithes or a set percentage that people should somehow feel tied to, and talk about giving whatever your heart's desire is, but be willing to expand your heart." The "who" from the Bible includes giving to family, to church, to gospel work outside the church, to needy Christians and the poor generally, as well as considering how to prioritise our giving.

Smith was keen to keep the book short so it could be inexpensive for churches to purchase and use as a resource they could give away. That being the case, while *The Cheerful Giver* does touch on the ways its three principles might be used for generosity with time, it does focus essentially on financial giving.

"On one hand it is a how-to – it's there to answer questions – but it goes deeper than that," he says. "If I had an aim for the book, it's not necessarily for people to give away more of their money to good causes, although that would be great. There are always those who aren't able to give away more money. They're stretched. But if they come away with a deeper appreciation of God's generosity to them and a desire to be more generous to others, that's a win.

"I think about the widow with the two copper coins; did she make any difference to Israel's bank account? No, but Jesus is much more interested in what God has been doing in her heart than the actual money.

"The primary aim of a book like this is not to increase giving but to produce more generous-hearted people." **SC**

The Rev Des Smith is senior pastor of Trinity Church Lockleys in Adelaide. The Cheerful Giver is available through Matthias Media.

There is also, of course, the challenge to modern media to consider whether their decisions unnecessarily intrude into the lives of those whose stories they tell. Are reporters offering truth to an unknowing world that needs enlightenment and education, or are they just chasing ratings?

The questions might be different for us. Yet we, too, have to consider how to respond to past sins and present evils, and grapple with blame, taking sides or forgiveness. In a world where digital technology makes everyone with a phone a potential storyteller and judge, it's certainly timely to consider these issues, and *September 5* is an excellent vehicle to do it. **SC**



Hostage drama keeps us on edge

Judy Adamson

September 5

Rated M

It's hard not to have an opinion about the seemingly endless strife between Israel and Palestine – especially after the past 18 months – so it's a brave filmmaker who would choose to take on one of the most awful stories in their long conflict history: the hostage crisis at the Munich Olympics.

Swiss writer-director Tim Fehlbaum wanted to retell this story from the inside, and found a way after meeting sports producer Geoff Mason who, in 1972, was working for US network ABC at the Games. This was only a few hundred metres from where a Palestinian group known as Black September took Israeli athletes and coaches captive in the Olympic village, demanding the release of more than 200 Palestinians in Israeli jails.

September 5 had been filmed and was in post-production before the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas on Israel made any work touching on the Israel-Palestine conflict fraught with difficulty.

While Fehlbaum has acknowledged this will have an impact on how many people view the film, the story he and his co-writers chose to tell focuses on the real-time efforts of the sports journalists at ABC to keep up with the unfolding drama.

This decision has been criticised by some as naïve or politically tone deaf, and praised by others as a stroke of genius. But it's not as though those working for ABC in Munich are presented

as apolitical. A senior member of the production team, Marvin Bader (Ben Chaplin), is Jewish and still grappling with the ghosts of the past – while a young German translator for ABC (Leonie Benesch) hopes, as many did at the time, that the Games will show the world that the Germany of 1972 is different to that of the still-resonant war.

Whatever their views, or ours, their TV studio becomes a sweaty crucible through which we all experience the events of that day. ABC is the only network providing live coverage of the Olympics, so a young Geoff Mason (John Magaro) and his team know they have a responsibility to show the world what is happening virtually outside their door.

Yet they face innumerable technological and physical hurdles to get the story out in the non-digital '70s. A reporter and cameraman have to get into the village; any film they take has to be smuggled out, then processed, before it can be used. And there's only one satellite, which all the networks have to take turns to use.

What the team needs is invented on the fly, with rotary-dial phones and rewired radios, to make an on-air link to the village possible and keep up with the activities of the German police. All this while flickering TV monitors provide most of the light.

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